AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION VICTORIA

ATC/AAFC BRANCH

ABN 96 091 342 304

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER

Issue No 87 March 2023

President's Message

Vale: Richard Orr.

The ATC/AAFC Branch are saddened by the recent passing of Richard who was a former Treasurer of the R A A F Association for a number of years as well as being a long associated member of the ATC/AAFC branch.

Our deepest sympathy to Leona and the family.

Vale: Wendy Watson.

(After a long illness) Beloved wife of Graeme, another ATC/AAFC Branch member of many years.

On behalf of all in the branch, the committee offers Our Sincere Condolences to Graeme and the family.

Well, after an extremely uncertain and somewhat shaky start due to the lack of numbers interested, our Christmas Luncheon, held on Friday the 2nd of December, 2022 was enjoyed by approx. 40 attendees in the Bistro Lounge area at Box Hill RSL instead of in the planned downstairs Upton Room 2.

Our thanks to our Secretary, Hugh Tank and his negotiations with the RSL's Functions Manager who understood our plight and allocated a large section of the dining area for our group.

This area proved to be so successful and suited to our needs that it could well be the answer to catering for lesser Christmas numbers again in future.

Office	Holders
President	Laurie Bell
Vice President	Peter Wilson
Secretary	Hugh Tank
Treasurer	Tony Synhur
Delegate	John MacDonald
Returning Officer	Graeme Smith
Newsletter Editor	Ian Cohn

Please send your contributions to
scsiac@bigpond.com
or
Box 486, Mt Beauty, VIC, 3699

Deadline for next issue – 26April23

Welfare

Branch Welfare Officers
Hugh Tank on 03 9877 3424
and **Peter Wilson**

If you are aware of any member who is unwell please contact Hugh or Peter.

President's Message (Continued)

On Sunday the 22nd of January, I once again had the pleasure of being an invited attendee at the AAFC's Graduation Parade of the Performance, Development and Leadership Course held at Point Cook in absolutely perfect weather.

Again, the standard of drill was exemplary and the cadets can well be proud of their presentation.

Congratulations to WGCDR (AAFC) Kylie Walker and the 4 Wing Staff involved. No doubt there will be ample photographic coverage of the day's events further on in this issue.

Our grateful thanks also to our branch member SQNLDR (AAFC) Samantha O'Sullivan (Staff Officer Development and Community Engagement) who provides the information and photographs for our newsletters.

In closing……..On Friday the 3rd of February the attendance at the previously announced Special General Meeting which was held prior to lunch was disappointing. However, I take this opportunity to thank the 16 members who did attend and the 9 who submitted their apologies.

Hope you enjoy the fruits of the labours or our hard working Editor, Ian Cohn without whom we would not have this newsletter.

Enjoy!!!!!

Laurie.

AAFC News

AUSTRALIAN AIRFORCE CADETS – NO 4 WING UPDATE

From SQNLDR(AAFC) Samantha O'Sullivan
Staff Officer Development & Community Engagement - 4 Wing Headquarters Point Cook

WHAT ARE OUR CADETS UP TO?

4WG Australian Air Force Cadets

4 WING CADET REFERENCE GROUP (CRG) BALL 2022

On 19 Nov 22, the 4 Wing Cadet Reference Group (CRG) held the highly anticipated CRG Ball at the Officers' Mess of RAAF Base Williams - Point Cook. As the first of its kind in recent memory, this event was the culmination of months of planning and preparation from the CRG team and their staff mentors, and it certainly did not disappoint. With a ball theme of Old Hollywood where the red carpet awaited guests on arrival, complimented by a ballroom in black and gold and Old Hollywood portraits, cadets were able to mingle with others from across the Wing and make new connections. Throughout the evening, cadets and staff alike showed off their dance moves to well-known classics, including the Nut Bush and Macarena.

The outgoing CRG Chairperson, CUO Charlotte O'Sullivan and Deputy Chairperson CUO James Male were both recognised for their service. In their final address, the CRG chairs reflected on a tremendous year of growth for the cadet communicative body. In 2022, the CRG has been able to recruit a record number of Squadron representatives, enabling a diversity of cadet input and ideas to flow at conferences throughout the year. Major CRG projects in 2022 include facilitating the Push-Up Challenge, Debating Competition, Scavenger Hunt for Annual Parade, launch of the new Values 365 recognitions project, and finally the CRG Ball, which have all greatly enhanced the One Cadet Experience.

With all that has been achieved in 2022, the CRG chairs hoped for 2022 to be a testament to what is possible and encouraged cadets to strive for bigger and better things in 2023 and beyond.

"Everything begins with an idea. It takes one person with enough dedication to pick it up, chuck it on a shoulder and run with it".

THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH'S INTERNATIONAL AWARD GOLD CEREMONY- 4WG AWARDEES

On 21 Nov 22, The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award Gold Ceremony was held at the Melbourne Town Hall. As the first Gold Award Ceremony since 2019, 4 Wing was represented by a strong contingent of current and former members.

Congratulations to the following members on receiving their Gold Certificates, presented by Former Victorian Premier Dr Dennis Napthine AO.

CFSGT Dan Houben, CFSGT Tisha Shah, LAC(AAFC) Jason Fan, former CWOFF Reuben Iywan, former CFSGT Balraj Sing, former CSGT Matthew Wos and former CSGT Zavier Magil-Izzard

Additionally, SQNLDR(AAFC) April Currie was presented with the Silver Distinguished Service Medal and FLGOFF(AAFC) Bree Neve was presented with the Level 2 Trainer Badge. Both SQNLDR(AAFC) Currie and FLGOFF(AAFC) Neve are long-time supporters of The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award, and the achievements of our Gold Awardees are a testament of their dedication and passion.

4 WING END OF YEAR PARADES 2022

As the parading year draws to a close, squadrons showcase the drill and ceremonial skills that their cadets have trained for over 10 months.

4 Wing saw many fine examples of excellence in their squadrons as they held End of Year Parades and Awards ceremonies throughout the latter part of November and into December 2022

Congratulations to all cadets, and staff who trained and supervised them, as well as congratulations to the award recipients of all squadrons. We also recognise the service of the ageing out or departing cadets who have dedicated many hours of their lives to be developed as part of our Youth Development program.

We hope that the skills and experience gained within the AAFC will serve you well into your adult lives and careers.






4 WING PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT & LEADERSHIP COURSE 1/23 - JAN 2023

On Friday 05 January 2023, the first round of PDL Courses commenced at RAAF Point Cook for Cadet Under Officer (CUO), Cadet Warrant Officer (CWOFF) and Cadet Sergeant (CSGT) candidates. The newly formatted courses focus on building practical skills, excellence in leadership as well as focussing on the personal development framework of Competence, Confidence, Connection, Character, Compassion, and Contribution - otherwise known as the 6 C's.



As part of practical development in leadership and teamwork, course candidates on the 4 Wing PDL Course 1/23 attended Riddell's Creek Scout Camp to undertake their practical Fieldcraft exercise. This allows candidates to refine not only their familiarity in a bush environment, but to also receive guidance and skill refinement in planning, situational awareness, group command, navigation, and followership.



Cadets on the 4 Wing PDL Courses have undertaken leadership training as part of their syllabus, not only in theoretical instruction but also via practical exercises designed to extend their situational awareness and personal responses, whilst managing a team and providing supervision and monitoring welfare. Cadets also learn about styles of leadership, conflict management, and having difficult conversations.

Such life skills allow our young leaders not only to be able to apply these skills with confidence at a squadron level, but also where possible to transfer them to their school and workplace environments.

Former CUO Mark Hargreaves and former 414SQN cadet CAPT Courtney McKenzie, Australian Army spoke to cadets about University opportunities and life beyond the AAFC in a Defence career.

Mark Hargreaves is an RAAF officer cadet at ADFA and spoke to the cadets about his daily routine and living at ADFA.

CAPT McKenzie provided a leadership talk to our SNCO courses, detailing her time through emergency relief situations as a 19 year old, and currently (at 23 years of age) being the youngest person since WW2 to be promoted to Captain (at 21).



Leading Cadet candidates for the Junior Personal Development & Leadership (PDL) Courses went through their paces in a range of subjects and fields as their first engagement of AAFC detachment training.

For many this is their first time receiving development outside of the home training program, allowing them to focus on all elements of the 6 C’s, come out of their shells, and feel comfortable in embarking on leadership roles and responsibilities. They form new friendships and start to discover what their capabilities are.

We hope to see them all back at squadrons this year with a reviewed sense of confidence and understanding of the benefits of the Youth Development Philosophy that has trained so many cadets over its years of operations.

4 WING PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT & LEADERSHIP COURSE 1/23 – END OF COURSE PARADE

On Saturday 14 January 2023, the first Personal Development & Leadership Course (PDLC) End of Course Parade was held for the completion of CUO, CWOFF, SNCO courses at the main parade ground of RAAF Base Point Cook. 100 senior course candidates were able to showcase their skills in front of a crowd of family, friends, AAFC staff and VIPs to signify the end of their training and proudly display their newly achieved ranks.

Parade Commander was CUO Ace Simpson-Braden (403SQN Beaconsfield) and Parade Warrant Officer was CWOFF Boston Gyorosi (406SQN Frankston), with Detachment Commander FLTLT(AAFC) Trevor Howlett as Host Officer.

The Reviewing Officer was Group Captain Noel Corbet, Director Logistics Capability, HQ Air Force Training Group, who reviewed all flights and addressed the large crowd and cadets present on what was a very hot morning. He spoke of the history of the parade ground, its memorials, and the valuable foundations that a cadet's training can create for them as they move through their lives into adulthood.

The new era of Personal Development & Leadership Courses has led to a new format in the recognition of excellence in our young leaders who attend.

Awards traditionally presented on End of Promotion Course parades have been remodelled, which includes the removal of academic assessments, and the traditional academic ‘Course DUX’ awards have now been replaced with Excellence in Leadership Awards.

Excellence in Leadership Awards are presented to the cadet on each course that best displays excellence in leadership in areas of: Competence, Connection, Compassion,

Confidence, Character and Contribution and is underpinned by the AAFC Leadership and Followership guidelines.

Congratulations to the recipients of the Excellence in Leadership Awards on Saturday at the PDLC End of Course Parade:

- The Air Vice Marshal Wrigley Sword of Honour for the Cadet Under Officer's Course 55 Excellence In Leadership Award was presented to CUO Sandupama Goonesekera of 401SQN Surrey Hills.

- The Warrant Officer Ron Douglas Shield for Cadet Warrant Officer's Course 40 Excellence In Leadership Award was presented by Ron Douglas to CWOFF Maya Garrett of 414SQN Melbourne Girls

- SNCO Course 144 Excellence In Leadership Award was presented to CSGT Finn Carpenter of 409SQN East Sale

- SNCO Course 145 Excellence In Leadership Award was presented to CSGT Emily O'Donnell of 402SQN Watsonia

- SNCO Course 146 Excellence In Leadership Award was presented to CSGT Tyson Hayes of 411SQN Swan Hill

In addition to a 4 Wing trophy and certificate, recipients of the CUO and CWOFF Excellence in Leadership Awards also now receive a AAFC Gold Commendation, with the Senior Course recipients receiving a AAFC Silver Commendation.

JNCO COURSE DETACHMENT

On Sunday 22nd January 2023, the second Personal Development & Leadership Course (PDLC) End of Course Parade was held for the completion of Junior Non-Commissioned Officers courses at the main parade ground of RAAF Base Point Cook. 100 junior course candidates were able to showcase their skills in front of a crowd of family, friends, AAFC staff and VIPs to signify the end of their training and proudly display their newly achieved Cadet Corporal ranks.

Parade Commander was CUO Violet Perkins (408SQN Ringwood East) and Parade Warrant Officer was CWOFF Gus Thiel (419SQN Shepparton), who supported the detachment in cadet staff roles, with Detachment Commander FLTLT(AAFC) Trevor Howlett as Host Officer.

The Reviewing Officer was Air Commodore David Strong, Commander of Air Force Training Group, a distinguished officer with over 30 years' service as a pilot who has held various appointments including Commander of Air Force Mobility Group, OC of ADFA, OC of No. 84 Wing and 75 Squadron. He reviewed all flights and addressed the large crowd and cadets present. He provided the cadets with some strong insight into the values of the ADF, and encouraged them to draw from the training and lessons learned through their AAFC careers to build strong pathways for their future.

Congratulations to the recipients of the Excellence in Leadership Awards on the JNCO PDLC End of Course Parade at RAAF base Point Cook:

- JNCO Course 255 Excellence In Leadership Award was presented to CCPL George Sebastien - 401 SQN Surrey Hills

- JNCO Course 256 Excellence In Leadership Award was presented to CCPL Nikayla Harrison - 402 SQN Watsonia

- JNCO Course 257 Excellence In Leadership Award was presented to CCPL Hudson Mueller - 402 SQN Watsonia

- JNCO Course 258 Excellence In Leadership Award was presented to CCPL Liam Brewerton - 402 SQN Watsonia

- JNCO Course 259 Excellence In Leadership Award was presented to CCPL Oliver Sawyer - 406 SQN Frankston

Awards were presented individually by the Reviewing Officer AIRCDRE David Strong. In addition to a 4 Wing trophy and certificate, recipients of the JNCO Excellence in Leadership Awards also now receive a AAFC Bronze Commendation. On this occasion, the recipients were also fortunate to have been gifted a challenge coin from the AIRCDRE at time of presentation.

YOUNG CITIZEN OF THE YEAR AWARDS 2023 – 4 WING CADET RECIPIENTS

Congratulations to CUO Ace Simpson-Braden (403SQN Beaconsfield) who was awarded the Cardinia Shire Young Citizen of the Year Award 2033 during an awards ceremony on the eve of Australia Day.

Ace has been recognised for his involvement in the AAFC and his part in training youth in the Cardinia Shire.

Congratulations also to CUO Josh Berry (406SQN Frankston) who was awarded the Mornington Peninsula Young Citizen of the Year Award 2023 during an awards ceremony on Australia Day.

Josh was recognised for his work with his charity "Two Pairs Each". His goal is to donate 50,000 pairs of new socks for the approximately 23,000 homeless in Victoria. Amazing to see two 4 Wing Cadets being recognised as community minded young citizens!

WELCOME NEW RECRUITS FOR 2023

As our parading year is in full swing, we welcome the new recruits for 2023.

This is also the first intake to be trained through the new **Cadet Learning Continuum Review (CLCR)** program, designed to provide a more practical learning experience with a heavy focus on Leadership and enquiry based learning.

We look forward to following their journey throughout the coming months as squadrons roll through the new program.

AMAZING RACE ACTIVITY - 409 SQUADRON EAST SALE

409 Squadron's first activity of the year is an Amazing Race around RAAF Base East Sale and the local Sale area. This activity has adopted the same format as the popular television series and includes cadet, field and aerospace and STEM skills-based activities.

The key objective of this activity was to welcome the new recruits to the squadron, make new connections, provide leadership activities and learn about the AAFC and the Sale community. What a fantastic way to start the year. Well done to the organisers on providing a new and innovative activity to the squadron offering!

412 SQN SUPPORT VETERAN'S SERVICES IN ALBURY – WODONGA

Over the weekend of 11 – 12 FEB 2023, 412SQN Albury attend two activities commemorating the Vietnam War.

On Saturday 11 February 2023, cadets attended the 50th anniversary of the withdrawal of troops from Vietnam by providing an honour guard with the Army Cadets for Vietnam Veterans as they exercised their Freedom of Entry of the City of Albury.

412SQN Cadets also attended the commemorative service conducted shortly afterwards, which included Australia's Federation Guard Precision Drill Team, the Army Band Kapooka, and a display from a Iroquois ("Huey") helicopter which saw service during the Vietnam War.

On Sunday 12 February 2023, 412SQN cadets attended the National Servicemen's Day annual commemorative service. During this service cadets formed a tri-service guard with local Army and Navy Cadets units. Cadets were honoured to participate in these events commemorating important parts of Australia's military history and reflected on their connections with family members who served in Vietnam.





NATIONAL SERVICEMENS DAY 2023

On 14 February of each year, we recognise the service and contributions of our National Servicemen - also known as Nashos - to our armed services, and the important role that they played in serving our country after the Second World War.

Over 280,000 Australians were enlisted by way of a compulsory balloted military intake, and served our nation as part of the National Service schemes. Between 1951 and 1972, these service personnel trained in the Australian Navy, Army or Air Force for between 3 months to 2 years. They went on to defend both our shores and abroad, serving in Australia, with some also being deployed to Borneo, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea and off the Korean peninsula.

More than 15,000 served in the Vietnam War, where some 200 died and over 1,200 were wounded.

Several 4 Wing squadrons support NSAA branches throughout the year in attending and participating in annual marches and memorial services, and supporting them in the Melbourne CBD ANZAC Day parade. You will recognise Nashos by their navy blue jackets and grey pants.

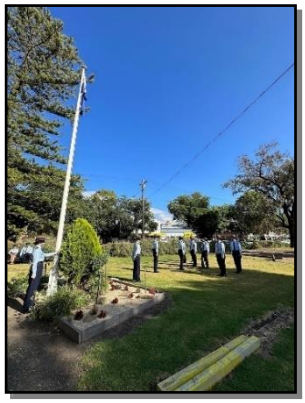
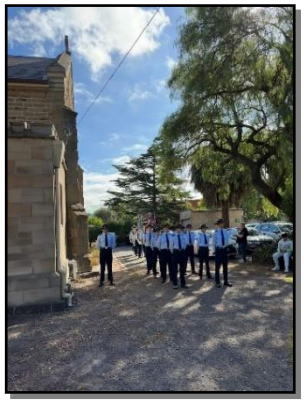
To our National Servicemen - we thank you for your service.

428 SQUADRON GEELONG ATTEND DARWIN DEFENDERS 81ST ANNIVERSARY SERVICE 2023

On Saturday 19 FEB 2023, 428SQN Geelong participated in commemorating the 81st Anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin at Christ Church in Geelong.

Each year, Geelong 427 and 428 squadrons attend this annual non-denominational in remembrance of the Darwin Defenders, and the short wreath laying parade following the service.



On 19 February 1942 Darwin was bombed by enemy forces, becoming the largest single attack ever mounted by a foreign power on Australia. The attack left hundreds of servicemen and civilians dead, and countless others injured, and was the first of at least 64 air raids. The region endured attacks for a period of 18 months in total, ending in November 1942.

In 2011, Bombing of Darwin Day joined Anzac Day and Remembrance Day as a National Day of Observance. In commemorating this event, the intention is that we also pass the history on to the next generation.

4 WING DARWIN DEFENDERS 81ST ANNIVERSARY TRIP 2023

Between 15 – 21 FEB 2023 , 427SQN & 428SQN Geelong lead a delegation of 48 4WG cadets and staff who travelled to Darwin as part of the 81st Anniversary commemoration of the Bombing of Darwin. This trip was initiated by senior cadets at 428 Squadron in 2021, and has this year allowed many 4 Wing cadets from around the state to experience the region firsthand and the impact it had on Australian history.

Cadets were accommodated at RAAF Darwin base across the 6 day tour and were able to visit many historical and local places including the Darwin Museum Underground WWII Oil Storage Tunnels, Darwin Esplanade walk where they saw local historical markers, the Darwin Aviation Heritage Museum and the Darwin Military Museum at East Point which features the multimedia Defence of Darwin Experience spotlighting the 1942 bombing raids.

On base they attended the 801 Squadron and conducted a daily parade with them, as well as swapped patches and learned about how their squadron operates. They also were able to visit the RAAF Darwin Officers Mess and Sergeants Mess, guided by OC8WG WCGDR David Champion who gave them all a unique perspective on the base and its base operations. Through the generosity of the 114 Mobile Control and Reporting Unit (MCRU) cadets were provided tours of various stations including the mobile communications, transport, radar and flight simulator training unit. Cadets also were taken to the local RAAF Air Traffic control tower to experience air traffic control and speak to RAAF members about the importance of roles in the Air Force.

On Saturday 19 February, the group also attended the Bombing of Darwin official commemorative ceremony in Darwin, held at the Darwin Esplanade precinct.

It was an extremely humid morning, where cadets and staff were amongst thousands who witnessed the nearly 2 hour ceremony which included a live re-enactment of the bombing ,courtesy of the Australian Army. The ceremony also featured a low-level flyover by two F-35A Lightning II aircraft from the RAAF's No. 75 Squadron.

CSGT Alicia Elliott laid a wreath on behalf of both the Geelong Squadrons and 4 Wing.

Cadets were fortunate to have a brief chat with Chief Of Air Force Air Marshal Rob Chipman AM, CSC who was present at the ceremony on his way out, and then a group of veterans from the Veterans Motorcycle Club before moving over to have a closer look at the cenotaph. They were also able to inspect the equipment used in the re-enactment and speak to tri service personnel who were present.

Well done to the organisers of this historical trip who allowed cadets to gain a new perspective of an historic event as well as visit many defence and military sites and have opportunities to gain leadership experience and make new friends.

AVALON AIRSHOW 2023

After a four year hiatus, Avalon Air Show is back!

4 Wing cadets were fortunate to be part of the working crew at the Australian Defence Force Cadets marquee, where they met members of the public, visiting dignitaries and member of industry to discuss the opportunities for young people who are eligible to join the cadets program.

We know our cadets proudly represented their organisation and gained a truly unique experience working alongside their staff as well as watching and getting up close with many RAAF and international aircraft and technological displays throughout the week.

Well done to WGCDR(AAFC) Kylie Walker and her team for once again organising a great display for everyone to experience.

Bob's Mustang Flies Again

From Barbara Eastgate on Facebook
January 26 at 4:36 PM ·

Robbie watching Pete Clements about to fire up our magnificent Mustang this morning at Essendon Airport for its first flight in nearly 15 years. In front of family & friends the sound of the mighty Merlin sprung to life. A short flight , a low & loud pass down the runway, cheers, smiles, hugs all round and a new era has begun. I am so very, very proud of my son, his commitment, skill & determination to restore VH BOB has been a truly epic endeavour. Along with 'The Boys' who have worked so enthusiastically over so many years our family is deeply grateful. Billie has been watching over us today & smiling. What a wonderful Australia Day admiring our Australian built Mustang.

A Fighter Pilot Story

PHOTO - RAAF
BUTTERWORTH

No 3 Squadron Mirages at RAAF Base, Butterworth
returning from an air-to-air sortie – 8 August 1973

By OWEN STICKELS
Flying A3-87 (above)

"Oh, wow! You flew the Mirage?"

And, 43 years ago, indeed I did. It's a question I'm asked even now at the age of 76.

Usually it's a man in his middle years … let's call him 'Harry' … who is asking the question. He's old enough to remember when the French designed, but Australian built, Dassault Mirage 111 was Australia's front-line fighter. The F-18 has been around a long time, so younger men interested in the Royal Australian Air Force's doings have sometimes never known anything at all about 'the French Lady'.

She was that!

Built in the early fifties during the Cold War between the West and the former Soviet Union, she was designed to get to height quickly to counter the Soviet Union's Antonov bombers expected to come in from the East.

And did it get up there in a hurry? You bet it did … brakes release to 30,000 feet in less than 3 minutes.

But this article isn't about a technical and performance history of the Mirage or an overview view of its technical elements and its capabilities, or a day-by-day list of where I was posted and what I was doing.

It appears because your Editor (who lives just a few klicks away and who I've known now for some years) has asked me – frequently – to write an article along the lines of "… and there I was at 40,000 feet with (… yes, I know it's a cliché. It's been around since 40,000 feet was possible in the fighter world) nothing on the clock but the maker's name."

Well, the 40,000 feet gets a miss in this article. I'm telling you about just three flights I remember which – after somewhere between 40 and 50 years – make an impression on 'Harry' or his mate 'Harry' or 'Harry' on the phone or, perhaps, another 'Harry' on the other side of Australia who would ask what it was about flying the Mirage that blew my hair back.

But first …

A few useful things to know before I write about the flights that caused my hair follicles to hang on to their hairs' roots for dear life.

The smallest tactical formation in a fighter squadron is 'a pair' – two aeroplanes that fly one and a half miles apart (Note: all distances will be in nautical miles and feet … because that was what we used). The leader is Number 1 ('One') and Number 2 ('Two') is his wingman.

On a fixed heading they will fly a parallel course the said one and a half miles apart – the formation known as 'Pairs Patrol'. Each pilot is able to check the space behind the other for a couple of miles … "Checking his six!" That's where the enemy's heat-seeking missiles will come from. This formation is standard whether at high altitude … say 40,000 feet … or at low level around 250 to 500 feet.

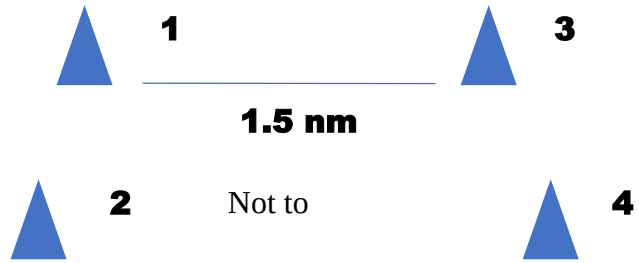
Where the leader might need to vigorously manoeuvre – as in a dogfight – the wingman slips into the combat position which is within a cone of approximately 30 degrees each side of 'One' and about 1,500 feet back. The job of the wingman is pretty tough then because not only are you watching 'One' to maintain your protecting position (that's a wingman's job after all), but you are also watching the other aeroplanes you're fighting as well ... and flying your own aeroplane, too, e.g. ensuring you don't exceed its 'G' limit.

A dogfight, by the way, takes place in a sphere; there's no up and down, or left and right relative to the earth. Everything moves relative to your aeroplane.

As the squadron 'Boggie' (or 'Bog Rat' - the nickname every squadron's most junior officer had to wear) I spent a lot of time hanging off the wing of whoever was leading.

Move up to a 4-ship formation and the two section leaders are 'One' and 'Three' – 'Two' and 'Four' being their respective wingmen. 'One', of course, is the leader of the four.

The tactics used by 'One' and 'Three' are the same as for just the pair.



Rosco and the Valley 'V'

No 3 Squadron, RAAF Base, Butterworth, Malaysia, 1973: I'm number 4 in a four-ship formation on a radio-silence split-nav strike out of the RSAF's[1] Tengah base on the western side of Singapore.

A split-nav is exactly that – a navigation exercise where two aeroplanes or two flights split up soon after take-off to run their own navigation course until meeting up again at an RV (rendezvous) for the high-speed run into a ground target. Fighters do not drop bombs after a high-level cross-country approach to said target. We navigate to the second at low level.

On the day in 1973, Flying Officer Ross Warne ('Rosco') was number three, and, therefore, deputy lead in the formation, and also my leader. He was a terrific fighter-pilot ... and a good bloke.

Rosco had the distinction one time on an air exercise with RAF Phantoms – also based in Singapore - of flaming out directly above Tengah airfield. He was chasing one across the island at about 250 feet in full afterburner not knowing that his supersonic fuel tanks were not feeding into the main

[1] Republic of Singapore Air Force

tank behind the cockpit. As his engine died he pulled his Mirage up in a steep climb and swung its nose through 200 degrees (back over his shoulder) to line up with runway 36. His speed was too great, however, and he overshot 36's centreline so he continued then to set up for right base approach on its reciprocal 18. He hit 250 knots (gear speed) but delayed dropping the undercarriage until he was assured of making a successful landing. He also needed to maintain the speed to keep his dead engine's blades rotating to provide hydraulic power and electrics to the aircraft.

With its engine out, the Mirage has – as is said – the gliding ratio of a brick. The delta wing simply flat plates the oncoming air and sinks.

It was a more-than-lucky break that Ross flamed out at exactly the point he did. Half a mile later to that point … we're talking less than 3½ seconds here … and it might have been impossible to make either runway.

I asked him some time later what his decision-making process was in the very short time he went from full afterburner at 600+ knots to the puffs of blue smoke from his main wheels as they hit the runway - less than a minute.

"Very simple, Sticks!" he replied. "Pulling the aeroplane up and round and attempting relights was almost automatic. Heading to the runway, I checked the speed. The decision? Increasing? I land it! Decreasing? I bang out."

As it turned out he crossed the fence at the usual 190 knots landing-speed, touched down, popped the chute and came to a stop clear of the centreline.

So this is the fellow who was my leader today … super confident and decisive 24-year-old Flying Officer Ross Warne.

Back to the story …

We launched out of Tengah as two pairs and joined up in pairs patrol at 500 feet heading nor' nor' west into Malaysia. Our ultimate mission was to dummy bomb the island off Malaysia's east coast (known as WSD 42) onto which we usually dropped live 500-pound bombs. We carried no ordnance today. To add to the complexity of the sortie we – once clear of controlled airspace (that happened within the first two minutes) – would maintain complete radio silence until we joined up after the strike to head home.

At 8 minutes and 3 seconds Rosco and I split off to run our own navex which headed over to the eastern side of the country. We would RV with 'One' and 'Two' somewhere to our north-east at 41 minutes 18 seconds elapsed time into the sortie.

I moved out of my combat position into pairs patrol. We were flying at our standard navex speed of 420 knots … seven miles a minute.

We were flying into weather. The cumulus (Cu) clouds in the tropics can – at very high level on certain days – top out at a higher climb rate than the Mirage can manage.

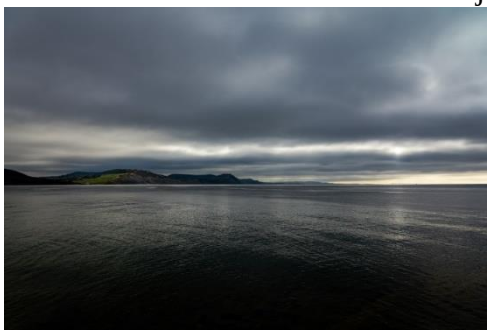
Always spectacular!

But down low at 500 feet, we weren't bothered by the tops – it was what was coming out at the bottom of them that we had to deal with … frequent walls of rain. And I mean 'walls'. The volume of water falling as rain was so dense the colour of the pattern was dark, dark grey. You couldn't see through it, so there was no way that you would fly into it.

Rosco was having to fly around them, often finding that there was a new block of rain round the other side. He was having to map-read … no GPS in those days … so his workload was really heavy. Remember he's having to keep in mind the RV time and to adjust our route 'on the fly'.

With all the manoeuvring needed, a steady 'pairs patrol' was impossible, so I found myself frequently dropping into 'combat'. And, with the radio silence, the familiar call, "Four, fuel check?" never came. My response, "Four's at 695" followed by the double click on his mic button as Rosco acknowledged my level, was missing in turn.

Suddenly, we straightened out heading south, and I moved out to pairs patrol. But it was a really fraught position because we were under an 8/8ths (complete cover) layer of very, very low cloud – not more than 100 feet above us. The jungle ground was flat (think: pancake for 20 miles), but only 100 feet or so below us. (Refer to the photo: I examined hundreds of photographs to try and find exactly the flying conditions we found ourselves in. Couldn't find one. This one is over water, but the cloud cover looks real enough, and in Malaysia on the day it was lower. The photograph gives you some idea at least.)



We were squeezed!

As far as navigation goes, Ross had aggressively chopped corners off our turning points to make up time, but it was obvious (yes, I was keeping my eye on the clock, too) that we were now behind. It was going to be close.

Ross's aircraft suddenly accelerated as he lit his afterburner as did I within a couple of seconds. I felt the usual kick in the back and less than 45 seconds later we were at 620 knots … close to 1,150 kilometres per hour. That'd get you to Albury/Wodonga from Melbourne in 16 minutes … I'm not sure V-Line could manage that.

We were humming! So close to the sandwiching jungle and cloud, the feeling of speed … here you are, Harry … blew my hair back.

At this point I'm mostly watching Rosco and the ground. I glanced ahead, and … WHAT???

There was a line of hills 15 miles away running directly – 90 degrees – across our path and disappearing into the cloud.

"Where the hell are we going to go to now?"

It took 2 seconds to read that line out loud (I timed it); in my head in the aeroplane at that moment I asked that question in 1/1,000,000,000,000,000,000th of a second (yes, that's a trillionth).

"Where to, Rosco?" I thought.

I started dropping over into combat because I figured that we'd be having to do some fancy work with the control column pretty soon.

Rosco was still rushing towards the hill line. He hadn't backed off at all. Our jets' engines were now getting ram air effect and so it was that we were maintaining just sub-sonic speed even though we'd shut down our afterburners.

Our tight space making me feel like the ham in a sandwich was having an almost claustrophobic effect – but not uncomfortably so. The jungle below and the cloud above rushed by a terrific pace.

It was exhilarating.

And then I saw it – a V in the hills straight ahead. Rosco must have known it was there. He had – I figured – been heading to it ever since we straightened up on that southerly heading.

And suddenly we were in it!!! The walls of the little valley were so close I could have brushed my fingers across their plant growth. Close … so close!

And – just as suddenly – WHOOSH! We were out. The cloud was immediately higher, there was nothing to hit us in front, and – checking my aeroplane's clock – saw that we should be at the RV in 33 seconds.

Ross had pulled his throttle back and the speed washed off to our cruising 420 knots again. I moved out to the left of Ross veering away to pairs patrol again. I needed to be to the left because 'One' and 'Two' would be coming in from our right, and …

There they were … about two miles away out to the west on a constant intercept bearing. We were already on the run-to-the-target heading. 'One's' underside flashed at us as he banked right to take up the heading. 'Two' had turned with him in combat, and I was quickly moving to the combat position on Rosco. We were four seconds early over the small lake that was our RV feature.

The rest of the sortie was anti-climactic. We drifted to line astern on 'One', accelerated to 540 knots, hit the IP (Initial Point) 22 seconds after which we pulled 4G to point the nose 45 degrees upwards, rolled the aircraft left towards the target at 8,500 feet as we arced up to 10,500 feet then pulling the nose down to aim at the rock – the first time we'd seen it. A slight pitch adjustment to get the bombsight on the rock … "7,000 feet, pickle!"

My imaginary bomb departed the aeroplane, I rolled the aircraft firmly to the right and pulled five and a half G to change my dive direction and cast my eye around the low horizon to find the other three.

"Got 'em!"

All the above had been done without anyone saying a word over the last 50 minutes.

We joined up in pairs patrol. Came the transmission from 'One', "Rattlers, check!" "Rattler Two!" "Three!" "Four!" We acknowledged in turn. A double click from 'One's' mic.

Comms re-established, the job done, the busy Singapore Harbour approaching … we headed at 500 feet back to Tengah.

Fifty years ago, I can still feel the 1,150 kph rush between the cloud and the jungle's trees, and the sudden whoosh through that little valley V. Most of the hair on my head is gone. Best of all, Rosco has been a mate ever since.

Departing Townsville in 1978

No 77 Squadron at Garbutt Airport, Townsville: "Harry … this is the wildest ride I ever had."

The squadron was on detachment in North Queensland to drop some High Explosive (HE) 500-pound bombs on Rattlesnake Island. Hitting Rattlesnake with those big heavy bombs was something every squadron pilot did during the annual cycle of continuation training.

We'd been there for a couple of weeks, and now came the day to fly home to RAAF Base, Williamtown – just north of Newcastle.

All the aeroplanes were carrying big jugs – 286-gallon droppable tanks under the wings. After departure, we had flight-planned for an easy run southwards at low level just off the coast until we turned inwards to re-fuel at RAAF Amberly close to Brisbane. We needed the fuel.

The Operations Officer, Squadron Leader Norm Goodall, and I had been programmed as the last pair to leave. He'd be leading.

Norm, a fiercely competitive and expert fighter pilot, had flown Iroquois helicopters in Vietnam. He was a larger-than-life character, and no matter how late the bar stayed open in the Mess, Norm was always … *always* … first in to breakfast. He'd be sitting there at the table, suited - ready to fly – and with a small cotton towel draped round his neck. It was known that the Scottish racing driver, Jackie Stewart, always wore red underpants when he raced - Norm had his white towel.

Little did I know, however, that his chopper experience was going to set me up for one of my most memorable Mirage rides ever.

Breakfast over; room vacated and bag packed for the Hercules transport; down to Ops for weather and air traffic briefing; Norm's mission brief with me done; A71 signed; and E500 at the flight-hut signed (the aircraft was now mine*) – we were ready to go.

*The air force divided all of its items into either A Class or C Class. A Class items had to be signed for, e.g. my aeroplane, tools, certain pieces of clothing, vehicles, et cetera. C Class items were

expendable … pencils, detergents, oils, and so on. It was widely rumoured that, once a Mirage's wheels were in the well on take-off, it became a C Class item. (But, perhaps, I jest.)

Norm and I walked out to our individual aircraft and climbed their ladders hanging on the sides to put our helmets on top of the front canopy frame. We checked the ejection seat, and then completed the pre-flight walkaround.

All done, we would walk out the front of the aircraft and wait until the slower of the two of us did the same. A 'thumbs up' from Norm and we climbed into the cockpit to strap-in. One of the ground-crew would be helping us do that before extracting the final pins from the ejection seat and handing them to us for confirmation and storage. I was now on a live seat.

I dived into the 168 internal cockpit checks. Completed, I was ready to start. Norm had briefed a 'start-at-time' at 1420. I had 21 seconds to wait. As the second hand flicked onto the 12 I waved my forefinger in a circle at the ground crewman out the front. He gave me a thumbs up and I 'pressed the tit'. There was a whirring sound as an electric starter motor turned over a starter turbine which – itself in turn – then rolled the shaft of the SNECMA ATAR engine. I showed the ground crewman out front two fingers on my right hand being pulled away from my other hand. He signalled the crewman under the aircraft to extract the external power lead. After-start checks done. I waited. Almost immediately, Norm checked me in:

"Blues, check?"

"Blue two!"

"Townsville Ground, Despot Blue. Two aircraft ready to taxy for Amberley. Received Juliet."**

(** The latest weather and air traffic control information.)

"Roger, Despot Blue. Taxy for zero one. QNH 1015. Winds are light and variable."

"Blues, zero one."

While those transmissions were being made, I showed the crewman my two thumbs pointing outwards. He gave the same signal to the man under the aeroplane and that man removed the chocks. I eased the throttle forward - the Mirage with its heavy fuel tanks a tad reluctant to move. Forward a foot or two and then I tested the brakes. I looked left and Norm was already out of his spot and turning onto the taxiway.

"Get a move on, Sticks," I said to myself.

I settled into the standard 100-yard taxying distance behind Norm's aeroplane and ran through my pre-take-off checks. Approaching the holding point …

"Blues, stud two, go!"

I hit the button for Townsville Tower.

"Blues, check?"

"Blue two."

"Townsville Tower, Despot Blue is ready for take-off. Request return to fly over the airfield low level."

"Despot Blue, line-up."

As we were lining up swinging our noses to the right with me in echelon right …

"Despot Blue, Tower. Request granted. Not above 2,000 after flyover. Clear take-off!"

"Despot Blue, take off, two thousand."

Watching Norm to my left 1030 position, I saw him look back at me and raise his right forefinger in a circle. I stood heavily on the brakes and pushed the throttle forward to its fullest extent. The

engine wound up to its maximum non-afterburning level of power … full dry. "RPM, EGT, O.K." I muttered under my breath to myself and looked again at Norm.

By watching me, he knew that I was ready to go. He had briefed a stream take-off with 10 seconds of separation. He released his brakes and rotated the throttle's top handle outwards to authorise afterburner light-up. Ten seconds later, I did exactly the same thing.

"Red light" on the panel – the afterburner was being lit. "Amber light, red light out." Full AB was available and I shoved the throttle fully forward to maintain my distance from Norm.

At 140 knots I lifted the nose and pulled my Mirage off the runway at 185. With a positive rate-of-climb I pulled the gear up and eased over to a combat left position on Despot One.

Norm was not climbing. "Ho! Ho! Ho!" I thought. "This is going to be good."

I reckoned he was holding about 200 feet - the red orb in his aircraft's exhaust betraying his afterburner still alight. I had to maintain my distance, so … so was mine. We were accelerating rapidly.

Out over Pallarenda Dog Beach, the Virago Shoal, northwards staying between the mainland and Magnetic Island we flew and then left around Shelly Beach to head back towards the hardstand where our aeroplanes had parked in their lines. From where Norm set the heading for the hardstand the ground was wide open (2023 - now there are buildings on it). To my left as we passed it was an old control tower and to my right a little way further a long-deserted Neptune flopped on its belly on the ground.

One of the things about chopper pilots in Vietnam is that they knew how to fly low … seriously low – their skids habitually brushing treetops. And remember for Norm his service in Vietnam was a temporary duty … he was an old school fighter-pilot.

But he hadn't forgotten how to fly low, and when I write low … I mean *low*. I suspect that if he could have lowered his aeroplane's undercarriage, the wheels would have touched the ground and he would have set a new land-speed record.

As for me, I'd never flown choppers and I recall thinking (exceedingly quickly, mind you) about how I was going to handle this. The answer was obvious; the jet exhaust distorts the picture behind it. I was flying in a loose combat to Norm's left and so all I had to do was stay above his exhaust trail. So I did … just about five feet above it.

Was I low? Yes! Had I ever flown that low before? No – not even on the sortie with Rosco earlier. So how low as I? As I went past the old Neptune I had to look *up* to the pilots' windshield. I reckon I was less than 10 feet above the ground.

And we were hiking. I didn't take my eyes off the exhaust trail, or the ground or Norm ahead. We were close to 600 knots … certainly way faster than 1,000 kilometres per hour.

Just before the hardstand, Norm pulled his aeroplane's nose up to climb at about 60 degrees before rolling inverted and pulling G so as not to breach the 2,000-foot authorisation. He then rolled 90 degrees to the right and pulled the nose towards the coast for the run down to Amberley.

I did exactly the same. Out to sea a couple of minutes later, I settled into pairs patrol outboard of Despot One. I can't remember what altitude we flew to Brisbane at, but it was never above 500 feet.

I liked flying with Norm. He was a terrific leader.

So, there you are, Harry. The old hair trick again.

Closing speed … 4,000 kph

I've got one more for you, m' boy! A short one!

When we did ACTs (Air Combat Tactics … dog fighting, in other words) we were directed by ground-based air combat controllers. They would watch the fight on radar and be able to tell us that where our 'enemies' were – both in altitude and distance.

“Three, you’ve got one coming in on you from your left eight-o’clock … 5,000 feet high.”

You’d know where to look.

Each flight would have its own controller.

So that’s how a fight was done. It might have been between two pairs, or two singles, or a single and a pair or a pair up against a four-ship.

The two ‘teams’ would climb out of Williamtown (this story took place from that base) on their own separate radials … one to the north and the other to the south. Once we were established on the radials, our fighter-controllers took over. We’d fly outbound until we were at least 150 miles apart. Then our controller would turn us inwards to ‘face our foe’.

You would fly towards one another and the moment you were alongside you’d be turning to shoot the ‘enemy’ down. You’d initially pull to maximum G (6.7 in the Mirage at that time) remembering to ease the G as you became subsonic. If you didn’t the centre-of-pressure on the wing and fuselage would leap forward, the nose would kick up and you’d found that you had overstressed the aeroplane.

“Damn!”

Quite apart from the mechanical issue, you’d berate yourself because you failed to transition back to subsonic professionally. Your pride suffered. We always watched that moment very carefully.

But this quick story is not so much about the fight, but the sensational speed of closing on the day.

I think I was still with 77 squadron … I was a single and going to be fighting a pair. They would be in pairs patrol separated by one and a half miles.

My aim would be to ‘thread the needle’ … that is, meet them head on and pass between them before we all turned at maximum G to get into the fight.

Outbound southwards on the radial I climbed to nearly 47,000 feet before my controller turned me back to the north. She advised me that my target was nearly 180 miles away – further apart than usual. I cracked the afterburner and began to accelerate dropping the nose just a fraction to assist the process.

I was at Mach .9 so the transition to supersonic speed came up almost straight away. Early films portrayed going supersonic as a dramatic event … full of worrying vibrations and real danger, but that’s not the case in the Mirage. Nothing untoward happens at all.

PHOTO
ADF-SERIALS

The only thing you’ll notice is that the pressure wave you’re about to pass through is building and the altimeter (thinking it is descending to higher pressure air) shows you a slight reduction in altitude. When it flicks back to indicate your exact altitude, you are already supersonic. Your Mach number will be about 1.05.

No bumps … smooth as …

Far below the ground is moving more quickly but the sensation of speed is nothing like as in the two stories above. That will come soon enough. The perception of speed in the aeroplane above 40,000 feet is similar to what you experience when you are driving your car on a country road at – say – 110 kph. The white roadside posts whizz by you at great speed, but if you look at a tree some 400 metres from the road, it’s passing by much more sedately.

Whatever the perception, the reality is that you’re travelling very fast 20 miles a minute at Mach 2.

I was heading towards that number and the big Cu’s were slipping by quickly now. My controller was counting down the distance between me and the pair I was to engage with. I picked them up on radar when they were just over 15 miles away. As I hit that second Mach number, my controller called that my opposition was at 10 miles and very slightly to my 12 o’clock’s right. At seven miles I saw them – the right-hand aeroplane brilliantly contrasting with one of the big cumulus clouds.

I was down the centre. They were just 8 seconds away, and ….

Thhhhwwweeewwww!!!!

We passed; we were into it!

Who knows how that fight went? Doesn't matter! I learned in the debrief that they, too, were at Mach 2. Our closing speed was therefore approximately 4,000 kph. Fast? That. Is. Fast!

"How's that, Harry?"

"You bet! Wow! It's *my* hair you're blowing back now."

4,000 kph! What could you do with that? Sydney to Perth in 49 minutes. Sydney to Melbourne in 11 minutes. Perth to Kalgoorlie in 8 minutes. Quick!

Postscript

In truth, if you are at 40,000 feet in the Mirage and there is 'nothing on the clock', that is, the ASI (Air Speed Indicator), it's probably because you're in a dogfight in a scissors manoeuvre with your opponent.

The two aircraft, noses high, weave back and forth trying to get nose authority on each other's aeroplane. It looks rather like a couple of Tiger snakes mating.

It's also most likely that at some time you'd have heard the call, "Two's ballistic!" meaning that Rattler Two (aircraft callsign) is out of airspeed and control. There's nothing that 'Two' can do but wait until his aircraft describes its own parabolic curve until it falls away to pick up speed and allow him to again control it rather than just ride it.

His opposing pilot will take care to get the hell out of his way.

La fin de mon histoire

I'd wanted to fly fighter aeroplanes ever since I heard *Reach for the Sky** as an ABC Radio serial at the age of 12. (* Based on Paul Brickhill's book about GPCAPT Douglas Bader who, on artificial legs, went on to become one of the Battle of Britain's fighter aces in World War Two.)

Happily, I managed to fly 1,000 hours in the Mirage (3,000+ total). It was everything it was supposed to be – a thrill, an honour and a privilege to be among the 300 or so RAAF pilots who flew *la belle dame française.*

Your writer

Owen Stickels in A3-89 in 3 Squadron's lines

Owen Stickels joined the RAAF on 78 Pilots Course in 1970. Nearly half-way through he was grounded when his annual medical revealed that he had become myopic. Usually, an aircrew cadet was let go under that circumstance, but his progress on course and a professional medical board offered him the chance to continue flying. He became the first RAAF aircrew cadet to be issued with glasses. It's now standard procedure on course. He graduated with 79 Course and went on to fly the Mirage with 3 Squadron, 77 Squadron and 2OCU. He also instructed on Macchis at 2FTS in WA, and at 2OCU at Williamtown and on the SF Marchetti 260 with No 150 Squadron as an Instructor-on-Loan to the Republic of Singapore Air Force.

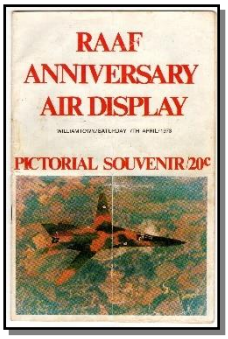
A jazz drummer, and the father of two adult children (in their forties), he teaches professional people public speaking. Owen is also a professional writer. He lives in Victoria's High Country and presents a jazz programme on Alpine FM on Thursday nights (www.alpineradio.com.au).

It's a Miracle

From Mike Sattler

Despite growing up in a small town in north central NSW, for some reason I declared that aircraft were my passion. In fact, my earliest memory is of Dad and Mum taking my brother and I to the local airfield one day so I could see aircraft up close. Some idiot let me sit in a glider. That was it. There was no stopping me now.

My Dad was a High School teacher, and by a minor miracle, the Department of Education transferred Dad to Newcastle when I was 5. Little did I know, there was a really BIG airfield near by. And it had lots of really noisy, fast aircraft. Really noisy. I got very familiar with the sounds of sonic booms, fast jets (Sabres back then) and that delicious hum of a Vampire "beating up the airfield". As any self-respecting aviation geek would, I decided that I was to be an Air Force Pilot.



On The 7th of April 1973 the RAAF Anniversary Air Display was held at RAAF Base Williamtown. How do I know the exact date? Simple, I still have the Pictorial Souvenir (price 20 Cents). By now, the Air Force had some very, very fast (and incredibly noisy) aircraft. The F-4E Phantom and the Mirage IIIO/D. I was in heaven. Naturally there were static displays of aircraft and their maintenance crews, and something called the Air Training Corps.

Many years later, I joined the Scouts, but did not find it to be a good fit. My Dad suggested the Air Training Corps. He had been a founding cadet with 16Flt Blacksmiths, and he felt I might like it. Boy, did he underestimate that. So, at the age of 14, I joined the Cadets. Now, I got to "see" life behind the fence. Summer GST camps at Richmond and Williamtown, flights in military aircraft (the Caribou was my favourite, but there was also C-130 and UH-1B), plus getting to see the maintenance crews up close and personal. Even though I was determined to become an Air Force Pilot, I found the tours of the maintenance facilities the most fun. Especially when it was the radio/electronics section.

When my flight (they were not called Squadrons then) decided to start a radio club, I jumped at it. I found learning about what made radios work and basic electronics repair absolutely lit up my "Happy Light". Without my realising it, I had found my true calling. My grades in High School were solid, but not what I would call comfortable if I was going to apply for Pilot. But my parents had noticed something I had not. I had an engineering mindset. Electronic engineering. Dad and Mum were good friends with a retired Warrant Officer, who's son-in-law was a Cpl RadtechAir at 77Sqn. So, a "social visit" to see Steve at work was arranged. No one was the least surprised that on the 13th of April in 1982 I joined the Air Force as a RadtechA Trainee.

Being a pilot is fun,, (trust me, I am one) but getting to "play" with the big toys, was more so. After Rookies, I found myself at RADS (the RAAF School of Radio) stationed at RAAF Base Laverton. The next 22 months were hard, brutal, fun, silly and enlightening. Despite my best efforts (including a month in hospital after crashing a motorcycle) in May of 1984, the staff at RADS got sick and tired of my sense of humour, and against all sound logic, posted me to 481Sqn Mirage Maintenance. Miracle of miracles, I was going home, to work on the Mirage -The Miracle. Sent to 481 Cyrano Section, I was to spend just over a year learning about and working on the Cyrano. Not the radar itself, but the test benches. Learning to calibrate the support test equipment, plus working on the ECM pod. Then I was moved to the Comms bench, working on UHF comms.

My bench work often took me to our Mirage Maintenance hangar, to help the crew deal with some odd snag or another, so in late '85, I was sent there to start working on the aircraft itself. I know it is a bad pun, but now things really took off. I got to work with some incredible people, and learn from them. I soaked it up. I was often covered in hydraulic oil, jet fuel, scratched and bruised, and grinning from ear to ear. Dad and Mum were right, engineering was me. The hangar (actually there were two) was where 481 did major servicing of the Mirage fleet. All squadrons (3, 75, 76, 77, and 2(F) OCU) would send their aircraft to Willy, where we would pull them apart, carry out mods or Airworthiness Directives, then rebuild and repaint.

When it came time for the post maintenance test flight, we would all gather outside to watch the departure and return, and wait for the list of "snags". One flight will always standout to me, as it was not only the first machine I worked on, but the most spectacular "test". For some reason I remember it as FltLt Wayne Higginbotham in the hot seat. Departing runway 30, power came up, brakes off, the nose came up, a massive belch of orange flame out the pipe, rapidly followed by silence, drag chute, speed brakes deployed, and tires smoking all the way to the barrier. Then the crash alarm sounded.

We all looked at each other and comments like "oops", "O oh", and "the sumpies won't like that" were muttered. Unbeknownst to us, as the nose lifted, six Galahs had taken flight as well. One hit the nose wheel, one hit the left main, and 4 went down the left intake. Higgy said later the ASI was a needle width below the mandatory ejection speed. The smell when the machine was towed into the hangar was incredible. Roast Galah mixed with kerosene, fire retardant and overheated brakes. Yummy. Then the bubble burst. In early February of 1986, I was summoned to the Boss's office (FltLt Flynn). I was posted. To RADS. What The Hell Blue Leader!!

I was not happy. No one knew how long I was to be there, but it was a Class "C" posting. This was odd. And so, after only a month at RADS, having doing a couple of extension/bridging courses, the C.O. (this was odd also, as normally it would have been the S.Edo) requested my presence. "You're posted Mr. Sattler. Maintenance Squadron East Sale. How soon can you get there?". That evening, I reported to the Service Police at East Sale (as it was quite late) and they gave me the keys to a room in the Transit Block. The next day, I handed my docs to the ClerkA in the Orderly Room of MNTESL and was sent to Radio Section. I was part of MNTESL for just over five years, but Willytown still followed me. As an ex "Miracle Worker" any time a Delta Dame visited, I seemed to be on Duty Crew. In fact, we used to joke that ESL was the retirement home for ex Mirage crews as there seemed to be a lot of us, despite considering how small MNT ESL was.

I enjoyed being a Miracle Worker. The challenge of replacing the doppler unit, or trying to not get covered in fuel when doing replenishments. The uncertainty of an engine start, or the art of getting three techs into a solo cockpit in an effort to find out how a disconnect got "disconnected". My last day on the Miracle was when 75Sqn called in to East Sale on their Mirage Farewell flight. Good friends were part of the support crew, and the air crew. I got to do one last "Turnaround", and a friend took a photo of a happy me in the cockpit of the machine I was tasked with. That photo sits in pride of place in my study to this day.

After East Sale I ended up at ARDU and by now we had the Hornet. I was part of the Hornet Maintenance team and ended up as SNCOIC Avionics. But, as you can imagine, there were a lot of ex Miracle Workers there, including colleagues from my time at 481Sqn. We were all now SGTs (and above) and were looked at as "the old dogs" by the "pups". But after work, sitting in the social club and having drinks, inevitably the conversations turned to our days as Miracle Workers, and the "pups" would sit quiet as we would reminisce. As a civilian, I became a Design Engineer and Flight Test Engineer. I have worked with Rolls Royce, Sikorsky, Bell, Universal Avionics and Garmin, but for me, being a former Miracle Worker is what turns on my "Happy Light". With apologies to Mike and the Mechanics, ***All I Need is a Miracle***.

Mike Sattler

(PS: YouTube; 75 SQN Mirage Movie Pt 1 and 75SQN Mirage Movie Pt 2.)

Note - Mike Sattler is now the Chief Pilot for SEAIR Vancouver, Canada. Your Editor was a Flying Instructor for Mike when he was learning to fly at the RAAF Laverton Gliding Club in 1981/1982.

Learning to fly - Luck was my fortune.

From member John McDonald

It was 1956, 66 years ago and I was 16 years old. I was Lucky to have joined the Air Training Corps (ATC) in 1952 at 13 years of age. Very fortunate that my December birthday gave me almost an extra year in the Cadets.

The Olympics were coming to Victoria in 1956. The XVI Olympiad from 22 November to 8th December. Air Commodore Charlesworth, RAAF, was forming a Statistical Team to keep score for the Modern Pentathlon Events. He needed Seventeen Cadets, two RAAF Trucks, and there were five Victorian venues to attend. I joined. The Olympic Village required Cadets as runners. I joined. The opening and closing ceremonies at the MCG required Cadets. I joined. It was going to be a busy time. Every day at the Olympics, was I Lucky!

Then Flight Lieutenant Bill Reilly, OC of 16 Night Flight called me in to Headquarters at North Melbourne and told me I had been nominated for a Flying Scholarship. He also told me that I had received the Flying Scholarship and would be commencing training ASAP (As Soon As Possible). Incredibly Lucky! Flying was to be conducted by the Royal Victorian Aero Club (RVAC) at Moorabbin Airport, and I was to report to that location ASAP.

Flt Lt Bill Heffernan introduced me to the College of Aviation Lessons for the Private Pilot Licence and insisted that the lessons be commenced ASAP. I started Learning about the Air Navigation Orders, Part 40, issued October 1955. Also Meteorology, Theory of Flight, Navigation and Aero Engines. Progress was determined by relevant question papers being handed in, ASAP.

Somehow during this time, issue of suitable flying clothing took place at the Q Store at ATC Headquarters. A Sydcot Flying suit, Leather Gloves, a Leather Helmet with Ear Cans, and Goggles. No Boots, but there was also a blue covered 1942 RAAF Form A18, Log Book.

I do not recall how I met the other six members of the Scholarship contingent or most of their names, but we did occasionally catch sight of each other at Moorabbin and have a coffee whilst waiting to go flying. Two who come readily to mind are Ray Vuillermin and Ian Tempeny.

Ray and Ian both flew later with Brain & Brown on Avro Ansons out of Moorabbin, to King Island and Flinders Island on Crayfish runs etc., Ray went on to fly with Qantas until the Pilots' Strike of 1989, and then flew overseas until retirement to Caboolture and his own collection of historic aircraft.

On December 11th, three days after completing the Olympic Games commitment, Ray and I were introduced to our Flying Instructor, John Bally, ex Luftwaffe (FW190's), at RVAC by the Chief Flying Instructor, Laurie McPherson.

John briefed us on what he would show us when in the air, being particular with the detail of the manoeuvre on the blackboard. We then went out to the tarmac apron and completed a detailed walk around of our aircraft, DH-82 "Tiger Moth", VH-RVL.

There was much arranging of seat cushions and then John climbed into the front cockpit and Ray into the rear. After John waved his hand and an attending mechanic swung the propeller, the engine started, the chocks were waved away and the aircraft rotated to the right with the help of the mechanic and trundled off onto the field. I watched as the aircraft rose from the grass and disappeared over the Golf Course to the East. Dingley Village occupies that area today.

The 'Tiger', was designed by Geoffrey De Havilland and first flew on 28th October 1931. It is an open cockpit, two seat biplane, powered by a 130hp Gipsy Major engine. No brakes, no flaps, the tail skid helps to slow it down while trundling over the grass of the field, and one or two mechanics or visitors catch it by the wingtips as it reaches a parking position on the tarmac.

Around 45 minutes later, one of several "Tiger's" taxing toward me over the grass turned out to be RVL. Ray climbed out of the cockpit and I climbed in. I remembered to plug in the Gosport tube.

The engine ticking over made a considerable noise and John in the front Cockpit was waving his hands in the air. The tube led from the ear cans in my helmet, to the mouthpiece in front of John in the front cockpit. There was a similar mouthpiece below the coaming of my cockpit. With both headsets plugged in, the instructor and the student could communicate back and forth throughout the flight, although the engine noise and the slipstream made it difficult to always hear correctly.

A burst of engine power applied from the front cockpit and RVL commenced to roll and with reduced throttle, John trundled it across the grass to the furthest part of the airfield, turned into wind, checked a green light from the distant control tower and commenced the take-off.

Airborne, Mr Bally instructed me sternly to take the controls. Feel what the column was doing, what the rudder pedals were doing. Gently, don't push or pull too hard. Use the thumb and forefinger. Check that the trim was set correctly to take the pressure off the 'stick'. Grasp the throttle, move it slowly, check that the Revolutions were at 2250rpm for climb. Level out at 1500 feet on the altimeter, 1750rpm. Keep a constant look out for other aircraft. See and be seen. Keep the aircraft straight. Keep the aircraft level. Turn to port. Use the stick. Push lightly. Push on the rudder pedal. Hold the nose up. Pull back on the stick. Keep straight. Keep Level. Every so often the control column moved firmly as the attitude was corrected by Mr Bally. Thirty five minutes later and Mr Bally has the aircraft under control, touching down in a three point landing.

I believe it was a marvellous time in the air, but I know I was very unsure of what had happened. Back in the Briefing Room, John explained what he had asked me to do in the air, how I had reacted and how well things were going to be.

The lesson 'Effects of Controls', was repeated on the next flight, then followed by Straight and Level, Climbing & Descending, Taxying, Medium Turns, Stalling, Spinning, Circuit & Landing as instruction progressed. My mind projected, John, stern Mr BALLY, as my only full time instructor over the course of the Private Licence Course, but the Log Book certifies that other instructors were also involved. B. Ticehurst, R. Collins, R Robertson, G. Fox, G. Frank, L. McPherson, W. Robinson, Mr Theumissen and Mr. Erfurt. The lessons were mounting up towards first solo and then 'Luck' struck again.

About the 20th of January 1957, the Cadets on the Flying Scholarship Course went into camp at RAAF Laverton to continue the Ground Instruction and Flying Training. We moved in, settled down and the next day, Ray Vuillermin and I were called out of the parade and driven to Headquarters, North Melbourne. There, I was asked by the Officer in Charge of the Victorian Squadron, to phone my father and seek permission to depart for India. I did.

John (left front row) in India.

On 26th January 1957 two Army, one Navy and one Air Force cadet, represented Australia at the New Delhi, India, Republic Day, followed by a four-week tour of Northern India. A fantastic adventure, extremely lucky, but a massive disruption to early flying training.

On return, Trans Australia Airlines required me to commence work as a Junior Traffic Officer and time for flying was put on hold until mid March, when Mr Bally again took on my training. Stalling, Spinning, Circuits and Landings. Circuits and Landings, Circuits and Landings. Finally, G. Fox on 31st March, checked me out and sent me solo! A fascinating and all-encompassing satisfaction of being alone in the air. So exhilarating. I recall singing the 'Yellow Rose of Texas' as I complied with the circuit requirements and breathed in the clean fresh air, all alone.

Over the next few months, when shift work allowed, I would make my way to Moorabbin and fly one or two hours solo or dual, covering additional instruction on steep turns, sideslips, loops, stalls, spins, forced landing, precautionary landing, wheeler landings. Then in late May, Mr Bally taught me low flying in the training area near Bonbeach and Chelsea, north of the Patterson River. A CSIRO tower located there made it easy to recognise, although the area itself was farmland and tendered to be occupied by cattle.

Moving along in the flying training, it was cross country flying exercises to Lock, Warragul, West Sale, both dual and solo. West Sale was just a large sloping paddock. A Tin Shed refuelling depot contained some 44 gallon drums of 80 octane fuel, a hand pump and bottles of oil. The dual exercise to West Sale was with Mr Erfurt and on checking the engine, the need to obtain engine oil was apparent. On my solo exercise to the same location, I also needed engine oil, but with no key for the padlock on the chain that secured the two doors, I needed to crawl under the doors to obtain the required quart bottle. The Sydcot flying suit withstood the exercise. That was Lucky.

Further intermittent training and solo flying resolved into my DCA Licence test by Mr Bowd on 28th November. He asked me to fly to Casey Field, Berwick, about 20 kilometres to the east, do a practice forced landing and then fly back to Moorabbin. Aligned with Berwick on final approach, as the aircraft descended steeply towards the grass, the engine suddenly roared into life, from idle, then immediately settled back. The testing officer said, "It's OK, we missed the pole, continue." That was lucky. I was subsequently issued with my Private Pilot Licence.

Casey Field, established in 1938, was owned by Lord & Lady Casey. Lord Casey was the member of Parliament for La Trobe and flew his light aircraft to and from Canberra to attend to his parliamentary duties. In 1994 when the Berwick campus of Monash University was to be built on the site, Casey field closed.

On January 5th, 1958, Miss L. Young is recorded as my first passenger and subsequently became my wife. There was that Luck again!

Editorial

The following article by member Tony Synhur reminds us that most Australians today are either immigrants or descendants of immigrants, many of whom have suffered many severe privations to get to where they are today in Australia. It also reminds us that humanity has not yet achieved a state of universal peaceful co-existence and that we should not become complacent.

The people of Ukraine are suffering immensely from criminal aggression by a neighbouring totalitarian dictatorship state and deserve our complete support. If only to make other potential aggressors think twice about continuing their criminal, greedy, inhumane and evil plans.

Ukraine

From member Tony Synhur

Hi Ian I erred in talking to you about writing an article for Dec issue I tried to tell the story about a kid who was born in Donetsk, Ukraine – very much in the news now (called STALINO during that despot's reign of terror and which is now being duplicated by his protégé PUTIN who is exactly of the same communist make up) had to leave his birthplace during the German occupation WW11, travel for 9 months in horrific conditions (eg; on foot, in cattle trains through warzones) finish up in Austria for five years.

The reason we had to leave home was because my mother was of German descent, was fluent in that language and had been forced to work for the German Wehrmacht as a translator at a huge transport facility near where we lived. This was considered by the local population as collaborating with the enemy and the German Officers advised that we should leave (in mid-1943 after Stalingrad) when they already knew that the war was lost.

During the war and post, the conditions we lived under were, to say the least, very poor. The four of us were quartered in a cabin room about 12 square metres, the rations included 1 kg of meat (of dubious quality) for the whole family per month !! Unless you have been genuinely hungry (not dieting) for years, you cannot imagine this situation.

Fortunately, we were selected under a migration process to settle in this wonderful country. We had a choice of a few others but my parents wanted to be as far away from communism as possible. The entry conditions were that adults signed a two year contract to work anywhere at anything. Also, we all had to attend English language lessons EVERY DAY whilst awaiting ship travel in a camp in Naples for 3 months, on board the ship for 6 weeks and whilst in transit camps here in OZ. In those days there was no money wasted on multi language publications. You had to learn the language, and we did. We kids (multiple nationalities) attended school with Oz teachers and had no issues and no one developed mental problems after what we went through ! We were just so pleased to have a roof over our heads (a whole barracks room for my brother and me !!!) and plenty of good food in the mess halls.

When the contract of two years was done, my father was offered a job in Melbourne with the MMBW in a road gang and we shifted here in 1951 from an immigration centre (formerly POW camp) near Rushworth central Vic.

Tony at RAAF East Sale as an Air Training Corps Cadet in 1954.

I attended Northcote High School. I was very impressed with the Army Cadet corps there and wanted to join the military to prepare for the conflict with Communism which my parents were 100% sure would come. But due to an experience with a German aircraft which visited the Town where we lived in 1942, I wanted to fly. So, I joined the Air Training Corps and I was lucky to gain a flying scholarship to achieve my desire. (I last flew a Technam light aircraft in 2021.) I involved myself in all ATC activities (discovered that I was very good at rifle shooting and was in the Air Training Corps inter flight and interstate rifle championships for four years) voted the inaugural 'Most Outstanding Cadet" at No 2 Flight Preston in 1952.

My view of the current situation in the Ukraine is that it exposes the Russian regime for the rotting corruption inherent in that system. But unfortunately, it will destroy my birthplace for a generation. Would it have been wiser to agree on a few territorial concessions and wait for that monster to die? Definately not. Ukraine's hereditary Viking spirit would not allow this.

Glory to Ukraine!!!

Note "Holodomor" Soviet Communist initiated genocide by famine (Stalin inspired and approved) in which an estimated 4 million of Ukrainians died in 1931/33.

The Editor's Epistle

Thanks

Thanks is due to our contributors to this edition of the Newsletter, our President Laurie, SqnLdr (AAFC) Samantha O'Sullivan, Tony Synhur, Barbara Eastgate, John MacDonald, Mike Sattler and Owen Stickels.

Without their contributions we would not have a Newsletter.

Your Editor

Impiorum requies


Vive l'Ukraine

Internet Links of Interest

Air Force News - https://www.airforce.gov.au/news-and-events/news

Space News - Everyday Astronaut's 2022 AstroAwards Youtube video.

and - Marcus House weekly report.

AFA ATC/AAFC Branch page raafavic.org.au/content/758/branch-atc-aafc

Air Cadet Alumni - www.airforcecadets.gov.au/our-supporters/alumni

Ultima Thule - New Horizons Successfully Explores Ultima Thule

Perlan Stratospheric Glider - Wave Rider | Perlan 2 Sailplane Soars to the Stratosphere - YouTube

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AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION VICTORIA

ATC/AAFC BRANCH

ATTENTION - ALL ADULT MEMBERS
of the
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The AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION (Victorian Division) would welcome you as a member of our Branch. As part of this proud Association with its long standing record of Service, the ATC/AAFC Branch membership consists of former ATC, AirTC and former and currently serving members of the AAFC. Associate memberships are available for partners.

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